

# **THE JACOBS REPORT**

**GILDA Z. JACOBS**  
**MICHIGAN SENATE**  
**Assistant Democratic Floor Leader**  
**FOURTEENTH DISTRICT**

**For Immediate Release**  
**February 17, 2006**

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## **PANEL OKS CHANGES TO TEACHER CRIMINAL LISTING**

### **List Ripe with Errors**

It's only been law for a month, but problems in the state's new teacher criminal background check system have resulted in errors involving thousands of employees.

A miscommunication between the State Police and the Department of Education has prompted rapid action on legislation to give schools more time to check the records before they are made public. Supporters hope the revised provision will be in place before a new list is sent to schools on March 1.

The bill (HB 5675) would give districts 14 days to review the accuracy of the criminal history lists before they would be subject to release under the Freedom of Information Act. The State Police would be required to include convictions involving felonies and assault/sex offense misdemeanors. Current FOIA procedures give public bodies up to 15 business days to respond to public record requests.

The Michigan Education Association (MEA) won a federal court ruling requiring districts to recall the current lists. As for HB 5675, the MEA feels the bill is inadequate to protect those who are wrongly included as having criminal convictions. Rather than being innocent until proven guilty, teachers and other school employees bear the responsibility of proving their innocence, which often means paying for fingerprints to match against State Police criminal records. "This here [sic] doesn't correct the flaws we have in the system right now with adequate data on the individual," said Al Short, director of government affairs for the MEA.

All employees will have to have fingerprints on file by July 2008, and the criminal record reports in the meantime rely on matching names and other criteria of employees compared to names of persons with criminal records. The March list will use additional criteria to further refine the list, officials say.

Matt Bolger, government liaison for the State Police, said that the police list provided to the Department of Education included potential names of anyone who could have convictions, a broad category to avoid missing anyone who should be on the lists. As a result, thousands of innocent people were included in the criminal list.

## **SENATE FISCAL: TAKE IT EASY ON BUDGET ASSUMPTIONS**

### **Projections May Not Come to Pass**

The non-partisan Senate Fiscal Agency (SFA) testified before the Senate Appropriations Committee this week, cautioning members against some optimistic projections of budget savings that may not come to pass in the upcoming fiscal year. This warning was on top of what the agency expects will be a needed supplemental appropriation in the current fiscal year to cover additional Medicaid caseloads. This year's Medicaid cost increases amount to \$172 million

SFA Director Gary Olson pointed out that increased federal funds have been an integral part of the state's budget balancing efforts over the last few years. This funding could be put at risk if Congress and the president decide to finally attempt to control the deficit.

In analyzing school aid payments over recent years, Mr. Olson noted that the state has actually boosted the per-pupil allocation by more than the rate of inflation. That piece of information could become an important discussion point over the next year as the K-16 ballot proposal, which calls for the state to annually increase education payments by the rate of inflation, goes before the voters.

Appearing before the House Appropriations Committee, Mitch Bean, Director of the non-partisan House Fiscal Agency, expressed similar sentiments.

## **PROPERTY TAX ESTIMATOR: DON'T BUY A HOME WITHOUT IT**

### **When a House Sells, the Tax Formula Inflates**

Buying a house? Your new property tax rate has nothing to do with the current occupant's rate. Under Proposal A, new homeowners have their property taxes assessed at a new rate that is sometimes much more than that of the current occupant.

The Michigan Department of Treasury's Millage Rate Database and Property Tax Estimator allow individual and business taxpayers to estimate their current/prospective property taxes as well as compare their property taxes and millage rates with other local units throughout Michigan.

<https://treas-secure.state.mi.us/ptestimator/ptestimator.asp>

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State Senator Gilda Jacobs represents the 14<sup>th</sup> Senate District, which includes Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Ferndale, Franklin, Hazel Park, Huntington Woods, Lathrup Village, Oak Park, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak Township, Southfield, and Southfield Township. She is the Minority Vice Chair of the Families & Human Services Committee and the Economic Development, Small Business & Regulatory Reform Committee. She also serves on the Government Operations and Health Policy Committees.

Constituents of the 14<sup>th</sup> District may contact Senator Jacobs at [sengjacobs@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:sengjacobs@senate.michigan.gov)

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This newsletter is produced in single-space form in order to save paper and transmission costs.

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**For Immediate Release**  
**January 27, 2006**

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## **GOVERNOR UPBEAT IN STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS**

### **“Working Our Plan, Securing Our Future”**

In her fourth State of the State Address, Governor Jennifer M. Granholm detailed the next steps in her plan to diversify Michigan’s economy, create thousands of new jobs, and protect Michigan’s families. While she talked of her hope for Michigan’s future, the governor outlined a concrete, aggressive plan to turn that hope into good jobs and a strong economy. Below is a quick recap of what she said.

### **INVESTING IN OUR 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY ECONOMY**

The governor will continue to implement her Jobs Today, Jobs Tomorrow plan to create jobs and diversify the economy.

- The Jobs Today initiative will create more than 30,000 jobs by accelerating \$3 billion in needed infrastructure projects in the next three years.
- The MI Opportunity Partnership has already matched more than 19,000 citizens with jobs and will place another 40,000 workers in new jobs in year two.
- The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Jobs Fund will attract job-creating businesses, especially alternative energy companies that can end our reliance on foreign oil.

Governor Granholm pledged to go anywhere to create jobs.

- International investment is booming in Michigan. German and Japanese companies have created and retained more than 10,000 jobs and have invested \$1.7 billion in Michigan in the last three years.
- Whether it's courting life science companies in Boston, technology leaders in California, homeland security businesses in Washington or their counterparts in Europe and Asia, the Governor will continue to sell Michigan as the place to create jobs.

The governor pledged to do anything to create jobs.

- The governor will continue her fight to get leaders in Washington to partner with us to help manufacturing by crafting a national health care solution and enacting fair trade policies and pension reforms.
- Michigan has already reduced permitting time for some permits by 66 percent. This year, the Governor said we will cut in half the time it takes for small businesses to open their doors and double the number of permits available on line.
- In 2004, the Governor required state departments to contract with Michigan businesses first. Today, more than 85 percent what the state of Michigan buys is sold to us by Michigan companies.

The Governor will continue to work to give our businesses a fiscally-responsible partner. She has resolved nearly \$4 billion in budget deficits without a general tax increase and has cut more from state government than any governor before her.

## **INVESTING IN THE HEALTH OF OUR CITIZENS**

Governor Granholm promised to dramatically expand access to quality, affordable health insurance in Michigan.

- The Michigan First Health Partnership will give more than half-a-million Michigan citizens access to affordable private health care plans.
- This plan will help small business employees, the self-employed, and the working poor who don't have access to employer-based insurance and don't qualify for government programs.

Every child in Michigan will have access to health care.

Cutting the number of uninsured in Michigan will benefit all citizens and our economy by reducing the financial burden on Michigan businesses and citizens who subsidize care for the uninsured. An estimated \$730 of a Michigan family's annual insurance premium pays the cost of care for the uninsured.

Governor Granholm will develop a statewide health information network to improve the quality and reduce the cost of health care.

- The Michigan Health Information Network will be the nation's first network controlled by patients to share health information confidentially and electronically among health care providers.
- Citizens will control who sees their information and their records.
- Pilots are underway in Southeast Michigan, Lansing, and the Upper Peninsula.
- The network will reduce medical errors, reduce duplication of services, cut insurance costs, and strengthen our medical privacy.

Governor Granholm called on the Legislature to remove the limits on stem cell research.

- Stem cell research holds the promise for finding cures and improving the lives of thousands of people.
- The Governor called on the Legislature to pass Representative Andy Meisner's legislation which removes the current limits.

### **INVESTING IN EDUCATION & THE QUALITY OF OUR SCHOOLS**

Governor Granholm is strongly committed to providing all of Michigan's children with an opportunity for a quality education, access to higher education, and ensuring that Michigan has the best-educated workforce in the nation.

The Governor called on the Legislature to pass her new \$4,000 Merit Award Scholarship to provide every student with an opportunity at higher education.

The Governor called on the Legislature to act quickly on her proposal for a rigorous high school curriculum to ensure that students are prepared for higher education and beyond.

The Governor outlined an agenda for strong and safe schools in which to learn.

- In her budget presentation next month, the Governor will call for a significant new investment in our public schools that will be focused on student learning.
- Last week, the Governor called for a \$25 per pupil increase for public schools for the school year already underway.
- The Governor's next budget proposal will increase the size of pre-school programs and invest in after school programs that tutor middle school students in math and science.
- The Governor has directed the Michigan Department of Education to require all school districts to promptly notify parents if their child falls behind.

- The Governor called on the Legislature to require school districts to adopt new anti-bullying policies to ensure children are safe at school.
- The Governor called on School Superintendent Mike Flanagan to require that all teachers receive proper training in maintaining classroom discipline.

## **INVESTING IN THE SAFETY & SECURITY OF OUR FAMILIES**

Governor Granholm called for a series of actions to protect our families' financial security.

- The governor called on the Legislature to raise the minimum wage for the first time in nine years and pledged her support to the ballot drive underway if they fail to act.
- The governor called on the Legislature to act quickly to allocate the additional \$25 million to help Michigan residents pay their home heating bills this winter. The Governor called on the Public Service Commission earlier this month to release the additional funding.
- The governor pledged to continue her efforts to reduce the high cost of auto and homeowners insurance through a first-of-its-kind pooling plan for citizens in urban communities and called on the Legislature to roll back insurance rates by 20 percent.
- The governor called for new high standards of corporate responsibility to ensure that state tax dollars are spent creating jobs here in Michigan, not moving our jobs overseas.
- The governor called on the Legislature to enact tough new ethics laws to reassure citizens that their elected officials are working for them and not the special interests.
- The governor announced that the state will offer a 401k to employees who do not have a pension plan through their small employers, allowing tens of thousands of Michigan families to find economic security through saving for retirement.

Governor Granholm called for a series of actions to protect our families' personal security.

- The governor called on the Legislature to pass her plan to require criminal background checks for employees who provide elder care or work in our state's nursing homes.
- The governor called for legislation to protect our men and women serving in the military by increasing the penalties on businesses that refuse to give them their jobs back when they return from overseas duty.

The written version of the governor's speech called on the legislature to enact strong new protections against identity theft including the nation's toughest notification law (sponsored by Senator Gilda Z. Jacobs), new tools to allow consumers to protect themselves and tough penalties for those who commit such crimes. This proposal was not mentioned in the speech because she ran out of time.

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